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March 28, 2013

## Black Metropolis National Heritage Area (BMNHA) Feasibility Study

Project Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, March 26, 2013

# Chicago Public Library Bee Branch Community Room 3647 S. State Street

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

#### **ATTENDANCE**

*Present*: Beth Johnson, City of Chicago, HPRES; James Wilson, City of Chicago, DHED; Leroy Kennedy – Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT); Paula Robinson – BMNHAC; Yvette LeGrand – BMNHAC; Delmarie Cobb – PAC; Kimberly Brown – PAC/Legacy Attorney;

*Absent*: Christopher Vaughn – WTTW; Dr. Christopher Reed – BMNHAC/Roosevelt University *CMAP Staff present*: Sef Okoth; Erin Aleman; Samantha Robinson; James Meerdink

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 10:05am with introductions; chaired by Sef Okoth (CMAP).

### 2. Recap of the last meeting

- Maps have been prepared that show federal legislative districts; these are for internal committee use at this time.
- All meetings regarding the NHA should be documented; this information will be helpful when the Feasibility Study is drafted.
- The History subcommittee will, most likely, meet again, prior to the next full committee meeting.
- Discussion of other, local heritage applications in progress.
- PAC has a map created by the Field Museum staff with all local, proposed heritage areas overlayed; also, discussions with I & M and other groups about working collaboratively, including a current I & M program on migration.
- PAC would like to access draft NHA partner list. Access to supporter list from other heritages areas would also be helpful.
- Regarding overlap with other heritage areas and competition: NPS representatives have
  expressed that heritage areas build on each other, with more staffing and focus in the local
  area increasing the chances of subsequent designations. BMNHA should be supportive of
  Pullman, and vice versa (The BMNHAC would like to support Pullman's application for
  National Historical Park designation. There were no objections from the PAC).
- BMNHAC has discussed another concurrent effort, the National Civil Rights Trail. This was legislation sponsored by Senator Roland Burris. They asked BMNHAC to identify

"civil rights" sites within the proposed NHA area, which they did. This resulted in a new appreciation for civil rights aspect of the BMNHA, even though the Great Migration period pre-dated the civil rights movement, emphasized a "civil rights continuum" that will continue to play a part in the NHA.

#### 3. NHA Partners List

CMAP asked PAC members to look over the potential partners to the list that was provided before the meeting. The partner list will be used to gather letters of support for the NHA designation, to be included with the feasibility study. The mechanisms for collecting the letters and their exact content haven't been determined yet. We'd like to have a good list by next committee meeting. It is also important to note, on the list or elsewhere, if partners are doing programming that may be related to the heritage area.

Theme Asset Matrix edits were suggested by the Committee:

- change assets with the "N/A" theme to a "general history" theme, or something similar
- Add alternative or 2nd theme column for documenting purposes; this may help with future uses of database
- Change "Recreation" theme to "Sports and Recreation"

# 4. **Management Alternatives** – "No Action Alternative/Use of Existing Authorities"

A memoranda on "No Action" alternative was presented to the Committee prior to the meeting. Some of the questions on the table for discussion to assist CMAP in better understanding how to develop this alternative were:

- What has been done by the Commission (BMNHAC) to date?
- What will be the role of the Commission moving forward if designation is not achieved? (work plan)
- Are there other organizations in Bronzeville that have been supporting or advancing the NHA goals? What roles will they play moving forward?
- Current memo reads as if BMNHAC will fall apart without designation, but that is probably not the reality. There is a different tone that can convey a more realistic sense of the situation in Bronzeville regarding heritage preservation and economic development, i.e. local entities can continue to work together to preserve history but broader economic development and real coordination of all the groups would be greatly enhanced by the NHA designation, and potential funding.
- As background, the no action alternative is a required component of the Feasibility Study. The best course may be to make some changes to the section, and then to make clear that the NHA designation is the preferred scenario.
- An important part of this section is to document what other groups, not BMNHAC, are doing in regards to heritage preservation, tourism, and related economic development. We currently do not have that documented.
- The coordination of entities is the important piece to stress in both scenarios. Economic investment is the goal, of course, but the coordination is what brings this and gives investment real impact.
- Another relevant question is whether public support for the NHA still exists without federal funding?

- There is obviously a prestige associated with designation, and this has a unifying effect in the community.
- The current branding of Bronzeville and cultural events as "New Harlem" is insulting to some degree. This effort should focus on getting the correct messages regarding the area's history and significance to those in power, and those who are cultivating tourism and economic development.
- The target of that "Harlem" message was international tourists who may not know about Chicago; on the whole, the City seems to understand what we are doing, and how we'd like to promote the area.
- A final question that we must address in this section is the possibility of attracting private funding in Bronzeville, for both preservation and economic development. Related to that is whether a third alternative should be discussed in the Feasibility Study, that of a private entity managing the heritage area.
- It's already happening, for example the Rosenwald, the Artists' Lofts, the City's "Planning Area" designation, HUD projects. Another related example of the message getting to the private sector is the local McDonald's franchises adopting heritage themes.
- Include infrastructure investments when documenting current efforts.
- Others efforts mentioned by Committee members were tourism and development focus of groups like Centers for New Horizons, MPC's "placemaking" efforts, QCDC identification of "go to" groups, industrial heritage programs, and the Black History Forum (Dr. Reed).
- To summarize, and what is critical to express in this section is that there are many things happening now, both investment and heritage programming, but that a higher level of coordination is needed.
- What is needed, and what designation can bring, is to "institutionalize" the coordination.
- Regarding the inclusion of a third management alternative, NHA management by the City or the State; would be helpful, although it shouldn't be presented as the preferred option.

## 5. Guest speaker from Gullah Geechee NHA for the next committee meeting

- Gullah Geechee was strong on economic development message, and was able to demonstrate that to potential stakeholders, legislative sponsors, etc.
- We should ask for specifics about benefits from their NHA designation. [Committee approved request to contact Gullah Geechee representative, and will provide questions for the conference call]

### 6. Matters Arising/AOB

- Regarding the politics of designation, like Gullah Geechee, BMNHAC should shore up support of local politicians in order to reach national legislators.
- For Committee's information, there is a meeting with IDNR coming up on March 28th.

- BMNHAC recently had a meeting with Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (McPier). They assigned someone to help with advocacy efforts revolving around historic districts in their vicinity, and in NHA study area. Namely, the Motor Row district is important to them, and has been named as one of the Mayor's focus areas for planning and development. McPier has been a supporter of the BMNHA from the beginning. We should also not forget about other, early supporters such as LISC.

## 7. Next Meeting – Tuesday April 30 from 10:00 a.m. to noon, location TBD

The meeting was adjourned at noon. PAC members will be notified in advance of the location of the next meeting.

